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A BURNING BUSH ON THE STAGE:
THE REWRITING OF EXODUS 3:1–4:17 IN
EZEKIEL TRAGICUS, *EXAGOGÉ* 90–131

Jacques T.A.G.M. van Ruiten

1. EZEKIEL TRAGICUS' *EXAGOGÉ*

The *Exagoge* ('Leading out') of the Jewish poet Ezekiel Tragicus ('The Tragedian') is the only surviving example of a Hellenistic tragic drama.¹ The content of the work is based on the biblical narrative of Exodus 1–15 from the translation of the Septuagint.² In some places Ezekiel has shortened the text, in others expanded it. He has rearranged the sequence and added completely new elements.³ The work originated sometime during the second century BCE,⁴ probably in Alexandria, although an alternate place of origin cannot be excluded.⁵ The *Exagoge* is at least partly preserved by quotations in the *Praeparatio Evangelica* of Eusebius (fourth century CE), in which he quotes nearly 270 lines.⁶ Eusebius says that his quotations are based on the Greek writer Alexander Polyhistor, who lived in the first century BCE. Polyhistor, in his work 'Concerning the Jews', gives excerpts taken from several Jewish and non-Jewish writers.⁷

¹ H. Jacobson, *The Exagoge of Ezekiel*, Cambridge 1983, 1–5; E. Vogt, *Tragiker Ezechiel* (JSHRZ 4.3), Gütersloh 1983, 113–33, esp. 115; R.G. Robertson, 'Ezekiel the Tragedian', in: J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2, 803–19, esp. 803; P.W. van der Horst, *Joods-Hellenistische poëzie*, Kampen 1987, 11.

² Jacobson, *Exagoge*, 40–7.

³ Jacobson, *Exagoge*, 20–3; Van der Horst, *Joods-Hellenistische poëzie*, 14.

⁴ Jacobson, *Exagoge*, 5–13; Vogt, *Tragiker Ezechiel*, 117; Robertson, 'Ezekiel the Tragedian', 803–4; Van der Horst, *Joods-Hellenistische poëzie*, 17.

⁵ Jacobson, *Exagoge*, 13–17; Robertson, 'Ezekiel the Tragedian', 804; Van der Horst, *Joods-Hellenistische poëzie*, 17.

⁶ A smaller piece is also preserved by Clement of Alexandria (*Stromateis*, 1.23, 155).

⁷ G.W.E. Nickelsburg, 'The Bible Rewritten and Expanded', in: M.E. Stone (ed.), *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, Qumran Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus* (CRINT 2.2), Assen 1984, 89–156, esp. 125–30; Van der Horst, *Joods-Hellenistische poëzie*, 11–12.

The surviving verses of the *Exagoge* are but a fraction of the entire play. Most scholars think that the play consisted of five acts:⁸ (1) Moses' monologue and his meeting with the daughters of Raguel (= Jethro) (1–67). (2) Moses' dream and its interpretation by Raguel (68–89). (3) The burning bush and God's appearance to Moses (90–192). (4) The messenger's speech recounting the crossing of the Red Sea and the complete destruction of the Egyptian army (193–242). (5) The scout's report on finding Elim and the description of the Phoenix (243–269).⁹

In this paper I focus on *Exagoge* 90–131, which describes the episode of the burning bush. This is part of Act 3 (90–192), which can be subdivided as follows: (a) Moses' call (*Exagoge* 90–131; cf. Exod 3:1–4:17); (b) the ten plagues (*Exagoge* 132–151; cf. Exod 7–11); (c) Passover (*Exagoge* 152–174; cf. Exod 12:1–20); and (d) Moses' instruction of the people (*Exagoge* 175–192; cf. Exod 12:21–28).

Exagoge 90–131 follows Exodus 3:2–10 and Exodus 4:1–17, as can be seen in the following overview:

Exodus	<i>Exagoge</i>
2:23–3:1	–
3:2–10	90–112
3:11–22	–
4:1–17	113–131
– 4:1–9	– 113–119
– 4:10–17	– 120–131

In considering this rewriting of the biblical story, we need to take into account that we are dealing with the rendering of the biblical narrative into a poetic text written in *iambic trimeters*. This implies that, as far as the use of words is concerned, there is little resemblance. Only on a few occasions does the same word appear in both Exodus and the *Exagoge*, and even when the same word is used the form or syntactical structure in which the word is used may be

⁸ Cf. Jacobson, *Exagoge*, 28–36; Nickelsburg, 'The Bible Rewritten', 126–9.

⁹ Robertson ('Ezekiel the Tragedian', 805) and Vogt (*Tragiker Ezechiel*, 115–16) describe a structure in five acts, which is slightly different (1–65; 66–89; 90–192; 193–242; 243–269); Van der Horst, *Joods-Hellenistische poëzie*, 13, describes seven scenes, dividing into two passages both the first scene (1–65; 66–67) and the third (90–174; 175–192). Moreover, Van der Horst suggests that originally there must have been a separate scene between ll. 174 and 175, describing the confrontation between Moses and Pharaoh. For this last point, cf. Jacobson, *Exagoge*, 35.

different. The rendering should be seen as a sort of *ad sensum* rendering and not as an *ad litteram* rendering.¹⁰

Moreover, we are concerned with the rendering of a biblical text, which derives from *narratives* with direct speech, into a *dramatic* text, which is to be played or recited on stage. Several changes are thus easy to explain. One of the consequences, for example, is that *introductions to direct speech* (cf. Exod 4:3a, 4d, 5a, 6a, 7a; 4:10a, 11a, 13a, 14b; 4:1a, 2a, 2c, 3a, 4a) are not taken over by Ezekiel, nor are *doublets* (e.g., Exod 3:3d, 8b, 9; 4:3c, 4de, 6c, 7c). In addition, *narrative descriptions* (e.g., Exod 3:2ab, 4ab) are not taken over but are intended to be evoked in direct speech on the stage.

Some deviations in *Exagoge*, with regard to the biblical text, can also be explained by the rendering of a narrative text into a drama. It would have been difficult to represent the burning bush¹¹ and the transformation of the rod into a snake on stage, so Ezekiel adds phrases that make the miraculous events, which were unexpected and threatening, more explicit. This explanation can be given for the *additions* in lines 90–95 in comparison to Exodus 3:2–3, for example the expression of surprise ‘ha’ (l. 90),¹² the phrase ‘miraculous and hard for a man to believe’ (l. 91), the word ‘suddenly’ (l. 92), and the phrase ‘for it is hard to believe’ (l. 95). Additions in lines 120–127 in comparison to Exodus 4:2–4 also strengthen the miraculous and threatening character of the scene.

2. *EXAGOGÉ* 90–112 AND EXODUS 3:2–10

In the first part of the passage under consideration (*Exagoge* 90–112), the text of Exodus 3:2–10 is followed quite closely. The first unit (ll. 90–95) is a reworking of Exod 3:2–3, and is seen from the perspective of Moses. The second unit (ll. 96–112) is a reworking of Exod 3:4–10, and is seen from the perspective of God. I shall start with the first unit.¹³

¹⁰ With this in mind, it seems to me quite unnecessary to look for parallel passages or even deviant manuscripts when there are words used differently from any given Septuagint text.

¹¹ It is possible that the burning bush was visualised on the stage. Cf. Jacobson, *Exagoge*, 98–99; Van der Horst, *Joods-Hellenistische poëzie*, 15–16, 33.

¹² For ἤα (‘ha’), see Liddell-Scott, 465.

¹³ I will put the texts side by side in the synoptic overviews. Although *Exagoge* is

LXX Exodus 3:2-3		<i>Exagoge</i> 90-95 ¹⁴	
2a	[] <i>An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire from the bush;</i> []	90	'HA, WHAT is <i>this</i> portent from a bush,
b	AND HE SAW THAT the bush has [] burst into [] flame,	91	MIRACULOUS AND HARD FOR A MAN TO BELIEVE?
c	<i>yet the bush was not consumed.</i>	92	[] The bush has SUDDENLY burst into FURIOUS flame,
3a	AND MOSES SAID,	93	<i>yet all its foliage stays green and fresh.</i> []
b	'When I pass by	94	WHAT IS GOING ON? <i>I shall approach</i>
c	<i>I will see this great sight,</i>		<i>and see the great miracle,</i>
d	WHY THE BUSH IS NOT CONSUMED'. []		[]
		95	FOR IT IS HARD TO BELIEVE.'

I would like to highlight some important variations in this part of the text. First, the appearance of the 'angel of the Lord' (Exod 3:2a) is not taken up by Ezekiel. He uses the word σημεῖον (l. 90: 'portent'), which can denote extraordinary phenomena with divine reference,¹⁵ but this could also refer to the burning bush.¹⁶ The reason for omitting the angel could be that the appearance of an angel on the stage was difficult or impossible, in relation to the audience.¹⁷

not an *ad litteram* of Exodus, I will nevertheless try as far as possible to give a classification of the similarities and dissimilarities between Exodus 3:1-4:17 and *Exagoge* 90-131. I put in SMALL CAPS the elements of Exodus which do not occur in *Exagoge*, and vice versa, i.e. the OMISSIONS and ADDITIONS. The corresponding elements between both texts, i.e. the quotations of one or more words of the source text in *Exagoge*, are in 'normal script'. I put in *italics* the *variations* between Exodus and *Exagoge*, other than additions or omissions. The quotations and the modifications of them can occur in the same word order or sentence order in *Exagoge* as in Exodus. However, sometimes there is a rearrangement of words and sentences. I underline these elements, with the exception of the rearrangement between Exod 4:1-19 and Exod 4:10-17.

¹⁴ The translation is taken from Jacobson, *Exagoge*, 50-67, esp. 56-9, with some alterations. For the Greek text of the *Exagoge*, see B. Snell, *Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*, vol. 1, Göttingen 1986, 288-301, esp. 292-5; cf. also Jacobson, *Exagoge*, 50-67, esp. 56-9.

¹⁵ L.H. Feldman, *Judean Antiquities 1-4* (Flavius Josephus Translation and Commentary 3), Leiden 2000, 209 note 703.

¹⁶ Cf. Liddell-Scott, 1593.

¹⁷ Cf. H. Jacobson, 'Mysticism and Apocalyptic in Ezekiel's *Exagoge*', *Illinois Classical Studies* 6 (1981) 272-93, esp. 280.

In addition, however, by omitting the angel, Ezekiel gets rid of a problem in the biblical text. In Exod 3:2a, the biblical author speaks about ‘an angel of the Lord’ appearing in the burning bush, whereas in Exod 3:4c it is ‘the Lord’ who calls him from inside the bush. By ignoring the angel, Ezekiel avoids getting involved in a contradiction.¹⁸ In line 99, Ezekiel makes clear that it is God who is speaking (cf. also Van Kooten, this vol., §1 on Alexander Polyhistor and Ezekiel).¹⁹ There is no intermediary.

Line 93 (*‘yet all its foliage stays green and fresh’*) is a variation of Exodus 3:2c (*‘yet the bush was not consumed’*). This interpretation seems to reflect an exegetical tradition, since it also occurs in other post-biblical Jewish texts.²⁰ I refer to Flavius Josephus (*Jewish Antiquities* II.266: ‘There, indeed, a wondrous marvel appeared to him. For a fire, feeding on a bush of brambles, *had left the greenery around it and its blossom unharmed, and none of its fruit-bearing branches was destroyed*, and this although the flame was great and very fierce’);²¹ to *Targum Neophyti* (marginal note to Exod 3:3: *‘and the thornbush was green and not consumed’*); to *Targum Yerushalmi* (on Exod 3:2: ‘The bush was burning with fire, *but it thrived and was not consumed*’); and to *Midrash ha-Gadol Exod 3:2* (‘Moses saw a great miracle, for he saw that bush *and it was blossoming* and shooting up in the midst of the fire’). The basis for this interpretation might be an association with the Hebrew **לבה אש** (לבה) in Exod 3:2a (‘in a flame of fire’; LXX: ἐν πυρὶ φλογός). The verb **לבלב** (‘to give flower’) is connected with the verb **לבה** (‘to get in flame’).²² According to these interpreters, the bush was in fact blossoming despite the fire. Ezekiel would thus be the first witness for this tradition of interpretation, although it is somewhat odd that he employs Hebrew wordplay while using the Greek text of the Bible.²³ Some other post-biblical texts stress the miracle that there was *no fuel* used while the bush was burning: Artapanus, Fragment 3, 27.21:

¹⁸ Cf. Jacobson, ‘Mysticism’, 280.

¹⁹ In line 99 it is said that ‘the voice of God shines forth’. Verbs of seeing mixed up with the voice of God can also be found in Exod 20:18. Cf. Jacobson, ‘Mysticism’, 280; Van der Horst, *Joods-Hellenistische poëzie*, 33.

²⁰ Cf. Jacobson, *Exagoge*, 100–1.

²¹ Feldman, *Judean Antiquities*, 209.

²² Cf. M. Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*, Jerusalem 1903, 688–9.

²³ According to Jacobson, *Exagoge*, 101, *Exagoge* preserves a Palestinian exegetical tradition.

Moses prayed to God that the people might be delivered from their sufferings. While he was supplicating, fire suddenly appeared up out of the ground (he [Artapanus] says), and it burned, although *there was no firewood nor other wooden substances in that place*. Moses was frightened by what happened and he fled;²⁴

and Philo, *Life of Moses* 1.65:

There was a bush, a thorny, puny sort of plant, which, without anyone setting it on fire, suddenly started burning and, although spouting flames from its roots to the tips of its branches, as if it were a mighty fountain, *it nonetheless remained unharmed. So it did not burn up, indeed, it appeared rather invulnerable; and it did not serve as fuel for the fire, but seemed to use the fire as its fuel.*

The second unit (ll. 96–112) runs parallel with Exod 3:4–10:

LXX Exodus 3:4–10		Exagoge 96–112	
4a	WHEN THE LORD SAW		
b	THAT HE MOVED FORWARDS		
	TO SEE,		
c	<u>the [] Lord called to him</u>	(cf. l. 99)	
	<u>from the bush,</u>	[]	
d	SAYING:	96a	<i>Halt, great sir. Moses,</i>
e	'Moses, Moses!'		[]
f	AND HE SAID:		
g	'WHO IS THERE?'		
5a	HE SAID:		
b	'Do not come near HITHER;	96b	<i>do not come near []</i>
c	<i>remove your shoes from your feet,</i>	97	<i>until you have removed your shoes</i>
			<i>from your feet;</i>
d	<i>for the place on which you are</i>	98	<i>For the ground on which you are</i>
	<i>standing is holy ground'.</i>		<i>standing is holy.</i>
	(cf. Exod 3:4c)	99	<u>The voice of God shines forth to</u>
			<u>you from the bush.</u>
	[]	100	HAVE COURAGE, MY CHILD, AND
			HEAR MY WORDS—
	(cf. Exod 3:6cd)	101	<u>for that you, a mortal, should see my</u>
			<u>face is impossible.</u>
		102	BUT YOU MAY HEAR THOSE WORDS
			OF MINE
		103	THAT I HAVE COME TO SPEAK
			TO YOU.

²⁴ See J.J. Collins, 'Artapanus', in: J.H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 2, 889–903, esp. 901.

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- 6a HE SAID TO HIM: []
 b 'I am the God of your *father*, 104 I am the God of your *fathers*
 (AS YOU CALL THEM),
 GOD of Abraham, God of 105 [] of Abram, and [] Isaac,
 Isaac, AND GOD of Jacob [].'
 c And Moses turned his face away, (cf. l. 101)
 d for he was afraid to look at God
face to face.
- 7a THE LORD SAID TO MOSES: []
 [] 106 I HAVE CALLED THEM TO MIND,
 THEM AND MY GIFTS,
 (cf. Exod 3:8a) 107 and so I have come to save my
people, the Hebrews,
- b '*I have* WELL *seen* the suffering 108 For I have [] *seen* suffering
 [] of *my people who are in*
Egypt,
 c AND HAVE HEARD THEIR CRY []
 BECAUSE OF THEIR TASKMASTERS;
 d I KNOW THEIR affliction.
 8a And I have come down to deliver (cf. l. 107)
them out of the hand of the
Egyptians.
- b AND TO LEAD THEM OUT OF
THAT LAND
 c AND TO BRING THEM TO A GOOD
 AND BROAD LAND,
 A LAND FLOWING WITH MILK
 AND HONEY,
 TO THE PLACE OF THE
 CANAANITES, THE HITTITES,
 THE AMORITES, THE PERIZZITES,
 THE GIRGASHITES, THE HIVITES,
 AND THE JEBUSITES.
- 9a AND NOW, LOOK, THE CRY OF
 THE SONS OF ISRAEL HAS COME
 TO ME,
 b AND I HAVE SEEN THE OPPRESSION
 c WITH WHICH THE EGYPTIANS
 OPPRESS THEM.
- 10a *And now go,* 109 *Now go, and report* IN MY WORDS,
 110 TO ALL THE HEBREWS FIRST, AND
 b *I have to send you to* PHARAOH, 111 THEN *to the king* MY INSTRUCTIONS
king OF EGYPT TO YOU,
 c *and you will lead* my people, 112 *that you lead* my people *from*
 THE SONS OF ISRAEL, *out of the*
land OF EGYPT'. *the land.*

In line 99, as well as in the following lines 100–103, Ezekiel stresses that Moses may only *hear* words. He may not see God. It is the *invisible* God who speaks out of the bush. Line 101 (‘for that you, a mortal, should see my face is impossible’) seems to refer to Exod 3:6cd (‘Moses turned his face away, for he was afraid to look at God face to face’), although it does not say exactly the same thing. Exod 3:6cd does not say that it is impossible to see God—Moses is only afraid to look at God’s face. When God calls to Moses from the burning bush, announcing himself as the God of the Patriarchs, Moses turns away so as not to look at God. Ezekiel goes one step further. God says that Moses should listen to his *words* because he is not allowed to *see* God. He may only hear him. He is possibly referring not to Exod 3:6cd, but to another text in Exodus, i.e. Exod 33:18–23, especially Exod 33:20, in which it is said that no man can see God and live: ‘You cannot see my face; for no one shall see me and live’. In other passages it seems that God can be seen (on this issue, see also Roukema, this vol., §1). For example, in Exod 24:10 it is said that seventy of the elders of Israel ‘saw the God of Israel’; in Exod 33:11 it is said that God spoke ‘to Moses face to face’; and in Isa 6:1 the prophet says: ‘I saw the Lord sitting on a throne’. It is possible, however, that rather than wanting to make a statement about the invisibility of God, Ezekiel was just reluctant to present God on the stage.²⁵

Lines 104–108 parallel Exodus 3:6–9 in a condensed form. Several exegetical techniques are used here: omissions, additions, variations other than omissions and additions, and finally rearrangement of words and sentences. As far as the content is concerned, several elements occur in Exod 3:6–9: the theophany (3:6); God hears and sees the suffering of Israel (3:7, 9); the promise to deliver them out of Egypt (3:8ab), and the promise to bring them into a land of milk and honey. This sequence also occurs at other places in Exodus 3–6, for example 3:16–17 and 6:2–8. In some places, the covenant or the remembering of the covenant is also mentioned (Exod 2:24; 6:4–5). From Exodus Ezekiel takes the theophany (ll. 104–105), the fact that God sees the suffering of Israel (l. 108), and the promise to deliver Israel out of Egypt (l. 107). His rendering of these elements is quite

²⁵ According to Jacobson, *Exagoge*, 99, Greek tragedy itself rarely puts Zeus on the stage.

concise, with several doublets omitted. For example, while Exod 3:8ab and 3:8b both mention the deliverance out of Egypt, this element occurs only once in the *Exagoge* (l. 107). Further, Exod 3:7 mentions God's compassion for Israel's suffering three times ('I have seen' . . . 'I have heard' . . . 'I know') and this is repeated twice in Exod 3:9 ('The cry . . . has come to me'; 'I have seen'), whereas God's compassion appears only once in *Exagoge* (l. 108). The wording in *Exagoge* 108 comes closest to that of Exod 3:7b.²⁶ The striking thing is that the phrase 'my people who are in Egypt'²⁷ is replaced by 'my slaves' (i.e. God's slaves). In the biblical book of Exodus, the Israelites are nowhere called 'slaves of God'. They are slaves of Pharaoh (cf. Exod 5:16; 6:6; 13:3; 14:5, 12). Elsewhere in the Bible, however, the Israelites are called 'slaves' of God (cf., e.g., Lev 25:42, 55; Deut 32:36; Isa 41:8–9; Ps 113:1), and in rabbinic literature it is emphasised that the exodus from Egypt was in fact a transition from being slaves of the Pharaoh to the state of being slaves of God (Palestinian Talmud, *Tractate Pesahim* 5:5 [32c]; Babylonian Talmud, *Tractate Baba Qamma* 116b; Babylonian Talmud, *Tractate Baba Mesia* 10a; Babylonian Talmud, *Tractate Qiddushin* 22b).²⁸

In Exod 3:8c God says that He will take the Israelites into a good and broad land, the land of the Canaanites, flowing with milk and honey. A similar promise is found in Exod 3:17. In *Exagoge*, there is no explicit mention of this land nor of a displacement of the Canaanites and the establishment of an independent state in the land. Possibly the addition of line 106, 'having remembered them, and my gifts' (ἐμῶν δωρημάτων), could be understood as an allusion to the promised land. Several exegetes interpret 'my gifts' in the sense of the promises connected with the covenant.²⁹ This suits the context very well. God recalls the patriarchs and the promises he made to them. In lines 154–155 Ezekiel combines the promise of the new land with the mention of the patriarchs: 'In this month I shall bring the people into another land, as I promised (ὑπέστην) the patriarchs of the Hebrew race'. However, δώρημα means 'present'

²⁶ According to Jacobson, *Exagoge*, 107, Exod 3:9 is the source of *Exagoge* 108.

²⁷ 'Egypt' (Exod 3:7b, 10b, 10c) and 'Egyptians' (Exod 3:8a, 9c) occur no less than five times in Exod 3:7–9. These terms are not mentioned at all in the parallel passage in *Exagoge*.

²⁸ Cf. Jacobson, *Exagoge*, 108.

²⁹ Vogt, *Tragiker Ezechiel*, 125; Robertson, 'Ezekiel the Tragedian', 813.

or 'gift', but not 'promise'.³⁰ Jacobson has put forward the interpretation 'the gifts that I have received' for 'my gifts' (ἐμῶν δωρημάτων). Although this notion is without parallel in Jewish tradition, it is possible that, for the sake of the pagans in the audience, Ezekiel introduced the Greek theological concept of *do ut des*.³¹ As an alternative, Jacobson has put forward the conjecture ἐμῶν δὴ ῥημάτων ('my words').³² This could refer to the promises to the patriarchs connected with the covenant.³³

The last alteration in this part of the passage is in lines 109–112. Instead of the single mission to Pharaoh in Exod 3:10, Ezekiel states: 'Now, go . . . to all the Hebrews first, and then to the king'. This is more in line with Exod 3:16–18, where God first orders Moses to approach the elders of Israel and then to go to Pharaoh. Also, in Exod 6:6–11 Moses is sent first to the children of Israel and then to Pharaoh. This variation results in a restructuring of the text and is closely connected to the second part of the passage under consideration, lines 113–131.

3. *EXAGOGÉ* 113–131 AND EXODUS 4:1–17

Ezekiel rewrites Exodus 4:1–17 as a tense, structured dialogue between God and Moses in *Exagoge* 113–131. It is striking that Ezekiel reverses the sequence of events. The first unit (ll. 113–119) is a rendering of Exodus 4:10–17 and consists of the 'objection of Moses against the call to go to the king' (ll. 113–115//Exod 4:10), followed by 'the answer of God, which is the sending of Aaron to Moses' (ll. 116–119//Exod 4:14–17). The second part of the passage (ll. 120–131) is a rendering of Exodus 4:1–9, in which the wonders of the serpent (ll. 120–128//Exod 4:1–5) and the white hand (ll. 129–131//Exod 4:6–9) are described.

³⁰ Liddell-Scott, 464.

³¹ Jacobson, *Exagoge*, 110.

³² Jacobson, *Exagoge*, 111–12.

³³ Cf., e.g., Exod 2:24; Gen 15:18; 17:2; 26:3–4; 28:13–14.

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a. *Exodus 4:10–17 and Exagoge 113–119*

LXX Exodus 4:10–17

Exagoge 113–119

- 10a BUT MOSES SAID TO THE LORD: []
 b 'OH, LORD, *I am not competent*, 113 '*I am not articulate.*
 EITHER SINCE YESTERDAY OR []
 BEFORE YESTERDAY OR SINCE
 YOU STARTED TO SPEAK TO
 YOUR SERVANT;
 c *but I am weak of speech and slow* *My tongue is*
of tongue'. 114 *neither skilled at speech nor fluent.*
 [] I CANNOT
 115 ADDRESS THE KING'.
 []
- 11a THE LORD SAID TO MOSES:
 b 'WHO HAS MADE MAN'S MOUTH?
 c WHO MAKES HIM DUMB, OR DEAF,
 OR SEEING, OR BLIND?
 d IS IT NOT I, THE LORD GOD?
- 12a NOW, GO,
 b AND I WILL OPEN YOUR MOUTH
 c AND TEACH YOU
 d WHAT YOU SHALL SPEAK'.
- 13a AND MOSES SAID:
 b 'OH, LORD, APPOINT, I PRAY,
 SOMEONE WHO IS COMPETENT
 c ANOTHER PERSON YOU SHOULD
 SEND'.
- 14a AND ENRAGED WITH ANGER
 TOWARDS MOSES,
 b THE LORD SAID:
 c 'IS THERE NOT Aaron, your 116 'I SHALL SOON SEND your
 brother, THE LEVITE? brother Aaron
 d I KNOW THAT WHEN HE SPEAKS []
 HE SPEAKS FOR YOU;
 e AND LOOK,
 f HE IS WILL COME OUT TO MEET
 YOU,
 g AND WHEN HE SEES YOU
 h HE WILL BE GLAD IN HIMSELF.
- 15a And you will speak to him 117 And you will speak to him
 b *and put my words in his mouth;* *everything I have spoken.*
 c AND I WILL OPEN YOUR MOUTH []
 AND HIS MOUTH,
 d AND WILL TEACH YOU
 e WHAT YOU SHALL DO.

- 16a He will speak FOR YOU *to the* 118 He will speak *before the king.*
people;
 b AND HE SHALL BE YOUR MOUTH, []
 c *and you shall be to him for the* 119 *You shall converse with me, Aaron*
relation with God. *will receive my instructions from you.'*
 17a AND YOU SHALL TAKE IN YOUR []
 HAND THIS ROD WHICH WAS
 TRANSFORMED INTO A SERPENT,
 b WITH WHICH YOU SHALL DO THE
 SIGNS'.

The most important difference between Exodus 4:1–17 and *Exagoge* 113–131 is the completely different structuring of the passage. This is due to the complicated structure of the text of Exod 3:1–7:12 with regard to the mission of Moses. In Exodus 3:1–7:12 there is a quite complex interaction between God and Moses, in which God charges Moses to bring the people out of Egypt and instructs him, but Moses repeatedly hesitates, agrees and withdraws himself. The commission, the objection and the removal of the objection appear several times (cf. Exod 3:10–12, 13–15, 16–17, 18–19; 4:1–9, 13–17; 6:10–12; 6:29–7:7). Moses hesitates so much that God becomes furious (Exod 4:14). In the text of Exodus, the *goal* of the mission is also confusing. Although Moses is being sent to Pharaoh (Exod 3:10), his first objection is related to a mission to the children of Israel (Exod 3:13); after this Moses is sent to the children of Israel (Exod 3:16), and somewhat later the elders of Israel are sent to Pharaoh (Exod 3:18). In Exod 6:6–8 Moses is again being sent to the children of Israel, and finally, in Exod 6:10, 13, 29, to Pharaoh.

Performing this complicated sequence of text would have been difficult on the stage. It would have been somewhat strange for Moses to go to the king, and then come back from the children of Israel, and then be sent to the children of Israel, etc. This structure has not been taken over by Ezekiel and the simplification can be at least partly explained by the rendering of the text into drama. In lines 109–112, which are connected to Exodus 3:10, Ezekiel shows the basic structure of the continuation of the text. Moses will go first to his people (the Hebrews), and after that to the king. The structure in *Exagoge* is as follows: (a) the commission of Moses to go to his people, then to the king (ll. 109–112); (b) Moses' objection to going to the king (ll. 113–115); (c) the first removal of the objection (ll. 113–119), which is concerned with the sending of Aaron and

addresses Moses' objection that he cannot speak; (d) the second removal (120–131), which is concerned with the wonders. Ezekiel leaves out the remarks in the text of Exodus (Exod 4:1, 5, 8–9) that the wonders should take away the unbelief of Israel.

The character of the rewriting of Exodus 4:1–17 in lines 113–131 is clear. The complicated and even contradictory structure of Exodus is highly simplified in the *Exagoge*. Doublets and obscurities have been left out. For Ezekiel there are only two missions, one to the children of Israel and one to the king. In the remaining text of the *Exagoge*, only the second mission (i.e. to the king) is represented, together with the objection and the removal of the objection. The mission to *the people of Israel* (together with Moses' objection and its removal) is not taken over, although we cannot exclude the possibility that the mission to Israel had a place in the *Exagoge* between lines 112 and 113. Polyhistor's editorial observation (between ll. 112 and 113), 'And a few speeches farther down', points in this direction, suggesting that there would have been some text between ll. 112 and 113. In that case, it may have been connected to Exodus 3:11–22. In any case, it is striking that *Exagoge* does follow Exod 3:2–10 and Exod 4:1–17, but not the passage in between.

The restructuring of the text also involves some important transformations. In the first place, Moses is represented as much less rebellious (on this issue, see also Nikolsky, this vol., esp. Introd., §1.2 and §2). He does not drive God to distraction. The omission of Exodus 4:11–14a is quite deliberate. Moses simply says that he has some problems with going to the king because he is not able to speak well. God's reply is also simple and straightforward. He will send Aaron to speak before the king. There is no conflict between God and Moses at all. In the second place, there is no conflict between Moses and the people either.³⁴ In the biblical text, Moses says several times that the people will not believe him, even though he is sent by God. This conflict does not exist in the surviving text of *Exagoge*, which, however, does not exclude the possibility that a conflict between Moses and the people did appear in lost portions

³⁴ Cf. Jacobson, *Exagoge*, 102–3; Van der Horst, *Joods-Hellenistische poëzie*, 32.

of *Exagoge*.³⁵ Ezekiel makes both Moses and the Jewish people appear in a favourable light, probably due to apologetic concerns.³⁶

b. *Exodus 4:1–9 and Exagoge 120–131*

LXX Exodus 4:1–9		<i>Exagoge</i> 120–131	
1a	THEN MOSES ANSWERED AND SAID:	[]	
b	‘IF THEY WILL NOT BELIEVE ME		
c	OR LISTEN TO MY VOICE,		
d	FOR THEY WILL SAY:		
e	GOD DID NOT APPEAR TO YOU,		
f	WHAT SHALL I SAY TO THEM?’		
2a	THE LORD SAID TO HIM:		
b	‘What is this in your <i>hand</i> ?’ []	120	‘What is that in your <i>hands</i> ? SPEAK QUICKLY’.
c	HE SAID:	[]	
d	‘A rod’ [].	121	‘A rod WHEREWITH TO CHASTISE BEASTS AND MEN’.
3a	AND HE SAID:	[]	
b	‘Throw it <i>on the ground</i> ’ [].	122	‘Throw it <i>on the ground</i> AND WITHDRAW QUICKLY.
c	AND HE THREW IT ON THE GROUND,	[]	
d	<i>and it became a</i> [] <i>serpent</i> [];	123	<i>For it shall turn into a</i> FEARSOME <i>snake</i> AND YOU WILL MARVEL AT IT’.
e	AND MOSES FLED FROM IT. []	[]	
		124	‘THERE, I HAVE THROWN IT DOWN. OH MASTER, BE MERCIFUL.
		125	HOW DREADFUL, HOW MONSTROUS. HAVE PITY ON ME.
		126	I SHUDDER AT THE SIGHT, MY LIMBS TREMBLE’.
4a	AND THE LORD SAID TO MOSES:	[]	

³⁵ The passages that have been left out between ll. 112–113 could have dealt with Moses’ mission to the Hebrews, and could have included a conflict. It must be admitted, however, that the rendering of Exod 4:10–17 in lines 113–119 is not polemical at all.

³⁶ Cf. Jacobson, *Exagoge*, 102–3; Van der Horst, *Joods-Hellenistische poëzie*, 32. Contrast Acts 7:30–40 where emphasis is laid upon the rejection of Moses by the Jews.

A BURNING BUSH ON THE STAGE

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- b '[] *Reach out your hand,* 127 'HAVE NO FEAR. *Reach out your*
c *and seize the tail* hand *and seize its*
128 *tail.*
d —THEN HE REACHED OUT HIS []
HAND
e AND SEIZED THE TAIL,
f *and it became a rod in his hand—* It shall turn back into a rod.
5a 'THAT THEY MAY BELIEVE []
b THAT THE LORD, THE GOD OF
THEIR FATHERS, GOD OF
ABRAHAM, GOD OF ISAAC, AND
GOD OF JACOB, HAS APPEARED
TO YOU'.
6a AGAIN, THE LORD SAID TO HIM: []
b 'Put your hand into your 129 Now put your hand into your
bosom'. bosom
c AND HE PUT HIS HAND INTO HIS []
BOSOM;
d *and he brought his hand out of his* and withdraw it'.
bosom,
e [] and *his hand* became as 130 'THERE, I'VE DONE IT.
SNOW.³⁷ It's become [] like snow'.
7a AND HE SAID: []
b 'Put your hand back into your 131 Put it back into your bosom
bosom'.
c AND HE PUT THE HAND INTO HIS []
BOSOM;
d AND BROUGHT IT OUT OF HIS
BOSOM,
e *and again, it was restored TO THE* and it shall be as it was before'.
COLOR OF HIS FLESH.
8a 'IF THEY WILL NOT BELIEVE YOU, []
b OR LISTEN TO THE VOICE OF THE
FIRST SIGN,
c THEY WILL BELIEVE YOU BECAUSE
OF THE VOICE OF THE LAST SIGN.
9a AND IT WILL BE IF THEY WILL
NOT BELIEVE YOU FOR THESE TWO
SIGNS OR LISTEN TO YOUR VOICE,

³⁷ The Septuagint omits the word 'leprous' of the Hebrew text ('leprous, like the snow') in order not to play into the hands of anti-Semites who claimed the Jews in Egypt were all lepers and were banished from the country. Other early Jewish sources also omit the word 'leprous'. Cf. C. Houtman, 'A Note on the LXX Version of Exodus 4:6', *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 97 (1985) 253–4; Jacobson, *Exagoge*, 106–7; Feldman, *Judean Antiquities*, 210–11 note 723.

- b YOU SHALL TAKE SOME WATER
FROM THE RIVER
- c AND POUR IT UPON THE DRY
GROUND;
- d AND THE WATER WHICH YOU
SHALL TAKE FROM THE RIVER
- e WILL BECOME BLOOD UPON THE
DRY GROUND'.

The second part of the text (*Exagoge* 120–131) is a rewriting of Exod 4:1–9, and can be subdivided into two units. The first unit describes the miracle with the rod (*Exagoge* 120–128; Exod 4:1–5), the second, the miracle with the white hand (*Exagoge* 129–131; Exod 4:6–9). In Exodus Moses protests that the people will not believe him (Exod 4:1). God responds with a display of signs Moses can use to convince those who do not believe him (cf. Exod 4:5, 8). If they will not be convinced, God describes a third sign (Exod 4:9). Ezekiel changes several aspects. As a consequence of the restructuring of the confusing composition of Exodus, in *Exagoge* 113–131 only the mission of Moses to the king is brought up. The mission to the people is not mentioned in *Exagoge*, except for lines 109–112, although, as mentioned above, it could have had a place between lines 112 and 113. From line 113 onwards, only the mission to the king is at issue. Although the description of the signs is taken over by Ezekiel, their original function, i.e. to convince the disbelieving people, is lost. The wonders are instead used to convince Pharaoh. This transformation of function presupposes doubt by Moses with regard to his mission to Pharaoh, which is not obvious in the text. This doubt occurs elsewhere in the book of Exodus, i.e. in Exod 7:8–9 where God says: ‘And if Pharaoh should speak to you, saying: “Give us a sign or wonder”, you also shall say to Aaron, your brother: “Take the rod, and throw it upon the ground before Pharaoh and before his attendants and it will be a serpent”’. The resemblance between Exod 4:2–3 and Exod 7:9 makes it easy to apply the words of Exod 4:1–9 to Moses’ visit to Pharaoh.

As far as the rendering of Exod 4:2–9 in *Exagoge* 120–131 is concerned, several elements are noticeable. In the first place, there are several *omissions*. These can be simply explained by the fact that the narrative biblical text has been transformed into a drama. As a result, the introductions to direct speeches (Exod 4:2a, 2c, 3a, 4a, 6a, 7a) disappear as well as the repetitions in the narrative text of

an element in the direct speech (Exod 4:3c, 4de, 6c, 7c). In the second place, there are many *additions*. In lines 120–123, the author has filled up each line with phrases that do not occur in the biblical text. Ezekiel has possibly tried to embellish the text or had some difficulties with the alternation of the characters within one line.³⁸ By means of his additions, Ezekiel stresses the rapidity of the acts (120: ‘Speak quickly’; 122: ‘And withdraw quickly’). He highlights the frightening and threatening aspects of the serpent more than the biblical text. The added phrases ‘A fearsome snake’ (l. 123) and ‘Have no fear’ (l. 127), as well as the complete addition of lines 124–126, illustrate this. Lines 124–126 are, in a certain sense, a rewording of Exod 4:2e, where Moses’ reaction is simply represented by: ‘And Moses fled from it’. In short, much attention is paid to expressing the effect of the metamorphosis of the rod because it could not be performed on the stage.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The *Exagoge* is an interesting example of rewritten biblical text. Many of the alterations between the biblical source text and the *Exagoge* are dictated by the transmission of the genre: from a narrative text into a poetic and dramatic text. The omission of introductions to direct speech, doublets and narrative descriptions can be explained by this change of genre. The simplification of the complicated narrative structure of Exod 2:23–4:17 into a coherent text can also be explained as such. Finally, when it is difficult to perform specific episodes on the stage (e.g. the burning bush and the transformation of a rod into a snake) they are evoked by words. Other alterations, such as the more positive view of Moses and the Jewish people, are probably due to the Hellenistic environment in which the play took its form. It presents a much more positive view of the origins of the Jewish people and their first leader than was common in pagan circles in the Hellenistic Era (on this issue, see also Van Kooten, this vol., esp. §1). The omission of the promised land might also be due to this Hellenistic environment. For Jews living outside Palestine the

³⁸ Cf. Jacobson, *Exagoge*, 105.

'land' was probably not as important as for Jews living inside it. Finally, some motifs that Ezekiel uses in his reworking of Exodus recur in later rabbinic literature. He is probably preserving (older) exegetical traditions.